

## OAKWOOD ORAL HISTORY PROJECT TRANSCRIPT

Garland Tucker (was born in Oakwood in 1919)

Interviewed by Liisa Ogburn on November 18, 2011 at the Tucker House on North Person Street

Garland: OK. My name is Garland Scott Tucker Jr. I was born in the South at 420 North Blount Street in 1919, July the 27th 1919. I lived here until about 1940, 42, and from 1942 until the time that my mother died, she lived in the house as long as she lived. She died in April of 1972 and I came back once or twice maybe three times a week to see about her and look after whatever needed doing. She got along real well and so I never really was away from the house much. I'd spend a night up here almost every week.

After I was married, my wife would bring the children and stay on the weekends. So, I stayed connected with the house about as long as my mother lived, and then after she died, well, that was in '72, the house was vacant for two years. That's when the city had contacted me and said that they would love to have the house. I was real fortunate I had kept the house in tip top shape as long as she lived. It had a slate roof on it so that protects and you don't have any leaks much. I would hate to see them tear it down. They were tearing down all the houses on the street.

I believe the state property officer was named Mr. Carroll Mann, and he called me and said that the state had instructed him to buy everything from New Bern Avenue to Peace Street, and from Person Street to Halifax Street in that rectangle there. He said "I didn't contact you until Ms. Tucker died. Said, I knew I had heard she wanted to stay there as long as she lived." I sure appreciated his attitude about it. But he said I got to do something about it. I said, "well, the city said something to me kind of vaguely about wanting the house." He said, "well, go back to them. I'm just about getting run out of town for tearing down those houses on Blount street up there, but I don't have any choice. That's what the state told me I had to do."

[Laughs]

Garland: So, we worked it out with the city. One thing that happened, they had taken the house down on the corner of North Street, just the second house next door to it and I went up after I gave it to the city - still had a key to the house. I was getting some things out of it and I went back to put them in my car and my car was gone.

[Laughs]

Garland: They had towed my car. I called the man and told them "I'm telling you the truth. You all are on the ball. I hadn't hardly gotten the deed signed and given it to you before y'all towed my automobile when I'm trying to get my clothes out the house." He said, "well you stay right where you are, said we'll bring it back to the front door for you." Which they did, they brought it back. Didn't charge me the \$35 dollars. I thought it was right interesting how quick they were getting me out of here.

Liisa: What year was this house built?

Garland: It was built in 1915. It's not that old really. I mean it's not 100 years old yet. Getting close but not. Just like me, I was born in the fourth year of the house.

Liisa: So, your parents built this house?

Garland: My dad built the house, yeah. They lived on the house that is gone now, but it was the first house, the other side of the Governor's mansion on the corner of Jones Street. When he built this house they sold it and right next to the house at that time was Meredith College. That was on the corner of Blount and Lane Street there. Then when they moved Meredith out on Hillsborough, they made the Manson Park Hotel out of that and eventually the state bought it and tore it down. So, the neighborhood has sure changed a whole lot since I was there.

Liisa: Tell me about, is someone shuffling their feet? I'm sorry. Tell me what it was like to be a young boy living on Blount Street.

Garland: What it was like?

Liisa: To be a child, a young boy, here?

Garland: Well, of course you didn't see as much traffic on Blount Street as you do now. You would see a horse and wagon go by quite often, especially during the depression. You saw a lot of them when the people would come into town. We had a wonderful, quiet neighborhood. Most all of the young folks that I grew up with are gone now. The last one that lived on the corner of North Street just one house in between us, he died about two weeks ago. His dad was Fred Marlow who ran Marlow's Jewelry on Federal Street down there. H. Marlow and Son was the name of the jewelry store. But we had a wonderful neighborhood, it really was. Of course neighborhoods didn't move as fast then as they do now.

We had a streetcar came by the front door that ran on a track right down the middle of Blount Street. We used to enjoy going out and putting straight pins on the track so it would run over and make a pair of scissors out of them, looked just like a pair of scissors.

[Laughter]

Garland: One other thing that was nice for me was right behind the house was the Murphy School Playground and to get to school all I had to do was listen for the bell to ring and run out the house and I had a little ladder about two steps. I would climb up and jump over the fence and I would be at school in about a minute and a half. So it was real handy until I got out of sixth grade and had to go to Hugh Morrison which was down where the federal building is now by Newbern Avenue, the federal building. It was interesting. I was the only one of the four children that was born in this house. The other

three girls were older than I was. The nearest one to me was seven years older. She was born before we moved into this house.

Liisa: I heard they got their own rooms.

Garland: Yeah, they did. They had rooms on the other side of the house and I'm not sure which one had the front room, mother and dad might have had the room over this one. But that was dad's room and mother's room was the front room where in the years that I recall. I remember dad used to come in so often, the high window in the middle of the wall upstairs, he used to talk about how pretty the sun was coming through that window. That it was so bright in that room he just loved the way that - you don't see a bedroom much with a high window like that and it - a lot of good memories in this old house. We enjoyed it for many years. It was built in 1919. Mother died in '72 so that was almost 60 years that this family lived in it.

Liisa: Tell me about the design of the house. There's no house like it in Raleigh.

Garland: No, well, it's a - you know, I remember we started off with a coal fire furnace and they would back up and unload the coal off the shelf and put it in. When I got big enough that was one of my jobs, to help out. We had a colored man named William Jeffers as long as he lived looked after the house and everything, of course he did most of that but weekends when he wasn't here that was my job to shovel the coal in. Then we got what they call an iron fireman, the coal would come ground up in small pieces and you could put it in a big pile and it would feed it into the furnace. So we didn't have to shovel it then. But then later, we changed it to an oil furnace but it was always a hot water system. I reckon they still use that, I guess. It was slow heating up but it was real nice because you could turn it off at eleven o'clock and the radiators would stay warm for four, five hours.

The finest thing was when I was a little fellow, he used to come in the morning and he put a fire in each fireplace. To get up on a cold morning and be able to stand in front of a fireplace -- I've said many times -- that was real living, I tell you. Undressing in front of an old fire. I haven't had that happen for 60, 70 years.

[Laughter]

Garland: but other than that I don't know too many things to tell you about the house except it's been completely satisfactory. This room here was for a bachelor - uncle. He was here for many years. He ate his meals here with us and this was his room. Then when he - I have an aunt that lived in Norfolk and when she moved back to Raleigh, she was married to a doctor, and when she came back to Raleigh he bought a house on Lane Street and moved in there with her. That's the house that the state bought. I forget what they call it but anyway they lived there. My aunt sold it - her daughter sold it to the state after her mother died. So, we've been in the neighborhood here for a long time.

Liisa: Do you remember as a boy hearing stories about the Civil War when Sherman

came through Raleigh?

Garland: I don't - that was a little bit before my day when he came through.

[Laughter]

Liisa: Right, but did your grandparents ever mention that?

Garland: Well, you know, and it really had distressed me because when I was a kid we had a letter from General Sherman. My daddy was born in the house on Hillsborough Street. That is now the democratic headquarters, you know the one that's got the white columns next to the Catholic Church? That was his grandfather's house and the Yankee Army took that over as their headquarters. When the soldiers went there they told my grandmother that general Sherman has sent them to get her carriage and she said, "well you tell him if he wants my carriage come ask me himself." They went back and told him that and he wrote a letter apologizing for his behavior - which sounds kind of foreign to what you hear about General Sherman, but the letter was in the family.

I don't know what in the world ever became of it. It would be a treasure if we had it now. I mean it was interesting and folks, everybody wanted to see it. You know? That was probably 40 years after the Civil War--I reckon it was probably 50, about 1915, 16 or a little later. I was old enough to remember the letter but I don't know what became of it. I wish we still had it. Things like that have a way of kind of getting away sometime. Especially if they get passed around a lot.

Liisa: In an interview I went to this morning the person said that they had taken some family silver to be cleaned at the jewelers said, it looks like this silver has been sitting in water for a long time. Maybe during the Civil War, they set it down in the well.

Garland: Probably was. I bet so. I didn't hear any tales about what happened to the treasures so to speak in the house, whether or not they lost them. I have a table at my house, a drop-leaf table and it's got a lot of dents in one corner of it and my grandmother said that when they used it for the Yankee Headquarters there, they would put beef on the table, dining room table, and beat it with a hammer to tenderize it before they cooked it. Now I don't know whether you remember that or not but I remember when I was a kid you couldn't find a piece of tender beef like you do now. We had a block about this big on the back porch before they ever got cooking that we would always beat it on. That's the way it was, it didn't sound so strange to me when she said that's what happened to the dining room table. What I thought was quite interesting that they laid it on the dining room table, walnut table and beat it, but without those dents it wouldn't be near so attractive a table. Wouldn't have any story about it if the Yankees hadn't beat up the top of it.

[Laughter]

Liisa: I've heard stories about houses along your block too. I heard there was one house

where they used to roller-skate in the attic. Did you?

Garland: No, I don't remember that. I remember the house on the corner of Lane and Blount Street on the right-hand side of it where Mr. Jim Andrews lived. He was mayor of Raleigh for a long time. He had an old third floor of his house was a big open room and they had a pool table up there that we used to - rainy days we used to, that's about the only pool I ever played in my life but I enjoyed it. But his family is all gone now too. They had two girls and two boys that all of us grew up together along here. I don't know how they all left me here so long. 92 years, that's a long time.

Liisa: Did you have a horse and buggy?

Garland: No, I had a saddle horse and it's real strange I reckon they would put me in jail now, over on Blount Street. I had a goat that would get in the backyard, and I had fixed me a big pen and I raised pigeons. I loved chickens. I had chickens all the time and especially roosters. I thought they were pretty sweet. They would crow and carry on. I understand now Raleigh has a law you can't even have a rooster in town. They don't like them to crow in the neighborhood. We didn't have too many restrictions back in those days. Living was mighty good. I think I lived probably the best time that this country has ever seen from about the 20's to the 2000's. Everything was quiet. We had two wars -- which were dreadful -- but times were good and folks got along good. I've seen better times than this they talking about us having a depression now, you look at the football games and stadiums are full. You look at the Rockettes sold out and it just seems like it's an odd kind of depression that we're having. Where I used to see crowds be folks standing in line for soup. That was about the only collection of folks you would see back in the 30's. Everybody looking for a job of course then the unemployment was maybe 35%. We haven't had anything to compare with that so I'm thankful for that.

But they were times, you know. I remember folks coming to knock on the door and wanting to know if we had any work they could do or anything. There would be two or three a day and mother always asked them if they had anything to eat and she'd tell them to come on around the back and come in the kitchen. She had a little table on the side and she'd sit them down and give them a plate to eat if they were hungry. If they told her they didn't want anything well that was fine but she had a lot of customers back then. She'd tell them to come on in and feed them. She was interested in everybody's welfare. I used to get so provoked with her when I'd take her downtown to the dollar store and she'd have to go see every little girl in there and ask her how her sick child was and she was praying for them. It would take forever to take her downtown for something that she was shopping because of how many people she needed to check with and see how things were getting along. She loved people.

Liisa: Sounds like she was really connected, well connected...

Garland: You know, I think about something though that really kind of scares me now when I think about it. When I was a kid out on the front porch, well if you notice you got the door that you come back in the attic and on each side you've got the roof goes up like

this. I used to get a running start and run up that slate roof and sit on top of the column of the house up there and you could look all over town up there. I think about that now if a piece of that slate had broke or my foot had pulled out or something I probably would have fallen three stories to the ground. But that used to be one of my favorite things. You just don't know what a kids going to think of.

[Laughter]

Liisa: Who were some of your friends? Who was your best friend?

Garland: Well, I guess my closest friend was the Marlow boy I told you just died. Yet we lost contact when we got about teenagers and I went off to school and he - I'm not sure where he went to school, he went in the army and we just kind of lost contact. Another one that was real close was a boy named Haywood Smith, he died about three, four months ago. He lived on the corner of North Street and Halifax. One of the tall buildings is on the lot where his house was on Halifax Street. One of the state office buildings there. He was about a year or two older than I was. My next door neighbor on the downtown side of the house was Kenneth [??] Grant. He moved to Burlington and lived most of his life in Burlington. His folks ran Glen Raven Mills down there. He died about three, four years ago. So, most of my folks that I grew up with in Georgia are played out now. So I had to take on these young folks, these girls and everything, if you look at them enough.

[Laughter]

Liisa: Did you feel safe running around with your friends? Did you stay close to home or did you...?

Garland: Well, I always enjoyed hunting and most of the time away from home I either was at work or I was hunting and fishing. I enjoyed both of those. I didn't ever play any golf until I got 65, so that wasn't part of my life for a long time. But I was mostly around home until after I was married when I was gone at times. I was overseas off and on for about six years traveling for the Gideon folks that sold bibles to hotels and motels and prisons and schools and things. Which was an enjoyable time. I was only gone maybe six weeks in the Spring, six weeks in the Fall. I was assigned 23 countries in the Caribbean and South America and I enjoyed traveling and ended up moving it to 18 countries in Europe in the Mediterranean. It was a delightful experience for me, I thoroughly enjoyed it. Met a lot of good Christian folks, lot of them I couldn't talk to without an interpreter but they were fine people.

Garland: Do what?

Liisa: You talked a little bit about the Depression, tell me any other details you remember about it.

Garland: I can remember when - see I was in high school about that time at Hugh

Morrison which was down on Hargett Street, we had a furniture store at 112 East Hargett Street which was about two blocks up the street. A lot of times I would leave school and walk up there and I'd hear the folks complaining that they not only hadn't had a customer come in all afternoon but they hadn't even seen anybody walk by on the sidewalk. It was right amazing there. It was a grocery store next door to the furniture store called Rudy and Buffalo. I went in and bought some groceries from them and so I'd go over and I'd get me a half a pint of milk, which was a nickel, and a little chest pie was a nickel. I charged them on her account and I remember she took me in one day after that had been going on for a month or two and sat me down and told me we just couldn't afford it.

I mean the Depression was something. I remember up the street from the store was a Louie Sporting Goods shop. You probably never heard of it but they had a famous real, real fine sporting good store. Sold men clothes and all athletic equipment and they had a fire. A first baseman glove, which was a major league glove sold for that time, probably, \$9, \$10, \$12 dollars, cost you \$100 or \$200 now. Right? But it was smoked a little bit and they had everything on sale and had it marked \$3 and a half. Boy I wanted that thing so bad. I went up and looked at it, looked it, so I went back and got mother and I took her and went and showed it to her and she agreed it was a wonderful purchase but just can't afford it now. So I waited a few days and I talked to dad about it. I thought maybe - he walked up there too and looked at it and he said the same thing but he said we just don't think we can buy that now.

I did get one. You know, I thought many times that did me a whole lot more good than if they had bought it for me and given it to me. I wouldn't even remember I had the thing if they had bought it when I first took them up there, but that gives you kind of a picture. You see kids now with so many toys they don't know what to play with.

[Laughter]

Garland: We didn't have many things when we were kids like that. I remember I bought my shoes at Tom [SP] McCain's. They were about \$2.35 a pair. That's hard to believe but I've got a LL Bean catalog that I bought my first pair of boots out of. I still got it. It's right brand new, it's in perfect shape and it's got [SP] Shammy shirts in there \$2.25, two for \$4.00. Things like that. I got a pair of ten inch boots, \$5.85, genuine leather. It's just hard to conceive that anything was ever that cheap. You're talking about the Depression, I mean it...

Liisa: Yeah. Something else that was different is it sounds like a lot of the families on Blount street lived for several generations in the house. People didn't just move in from other regions.

Garland: No, that's right. When my oldest sister got married she and her husband lived with us just a little while, just after she got married then they moved right around the corner on North Street here by the apartments. There was an apartment building torn down, now it's gone, but they lived there for a good while. But all of my sisters that live out of state lived at home until they were married and then one of them went North to

live, one of them went to Asheboro, then the other lived here in Raleigh. But the family was always close by. It was good we could stay in touch with them. My bachelor uncle used to live in this room here. He never married. Called him Uncle Pet. He was my mother's pet. His name was Sheldon Durwood. Nobody ever knew about that. You could have called him that on the street and he wouldn't who you were talking about. Pet [??] Taco was his name.

Liisa: Can you tell them about Raymond, your rooster?

Garland: I told you I loved chickens, especially roosters. I had a little rooster that was a real pretty shade of brown. He was almost orange-brown. On my bicycle I had a stick like a walking cane and had it taped on there and I could sit him up there and he would stay right there holding on that stick. I could ride where I wanted to go and that rooster stayed right there. I don't know what made him not jump off or fly off but he was a real curiosity around the neighborhood sitting on my bicycle.

Liisa: Did you ever go play down in Oakwood Cemetery?

Garland: In what?

Liisa: Did you play in Oakwood Cemetery?

garland: No, I never did play down there, that was kind of the - of course you could only go so far when you were a kid. I can remember going downtown but I never had much occasion to go to Oakwood. I tell you what I don't remember, I don't ever remember for me or any of my friends driving us anywhere. I mean if we were going to go to the picture show at Friday at noon we walked downtown and went to the picture show or rode our bicycle. But I don't ever remember having a ride anywhere. we played ball as we got a little older.

Then when I was a boy scout, our nine mile hike was from Raleigh to Cary. We walked down there of course there wasn't so much traffic on the road then. It was just a two-lane road. There were probably 200 folks living in Cary -- so it was just a crossroad, a little grocery store, a drug store, maybe a filling stations or something was about all there was. But it sure has changed in my lifetime, Raleigh. I was talking about it the other day where I live now was five, six miles out in the country when I was a kid.

Used to keep my horse at the farm. We had a farm right where Glenwood Avenue butts into the Belt-line and we had a fellow that worked at the store. Every morning he would ride to the farm and get a milk can, then milk the cow. Gave us the morning milk and the folks that lived down there took the night milk. He'd go out there and get it about seven o'clock and on Saturday when I was out of school he would take me out to the farm and drop me and I would saddle my horse and ride the horse back into town. It didn't attract any attention then because you saw a lot of horses and there weren't enough cars to make it dangerous like it would be now trying to ride a horse.

I had one unusual thing. There was the prettiest girl you ever saw. Her last name was Batchelor. She lived on Person Street right where just before you get to Costco, her house was on the left up on the hill and there was a farm there. She was real pretty. She had the prettiest horse and she looked real pretty riding that horse. She rode it downtown a lot of times, right down Fayetteville Street. I was down there one day when she rode the horse up on the sidewalk and the policeman came up to her and said, "young lady you can't ride up here, you got to get back in the street." She looked right straight at him and says, "when you speak to a lady take your hat off."

[Laughter]

Garland: Funny how things stick in your mind over the years. But it was a good life and I thank the good Lord he's left me here this long to see as much of it as I have. I do want to tell you how much I appreciate how well y'all look after the house. It looks so clean and pretty. Keep it in shape. Just a few things that we still got laying around that you probably don't have over here. We might can work out to get the chandelier for you if you want it for the front hall. What you got up there is about what it was original but that other chandelier I noticed that I had it all in perfect shape when I was trying to work it out with the other family but we just couldn't seem to get our timing right to get it together or something, I don't know what the trouble was. But since then I had noticed to see if there was anybody that repaired or refurbished those things and I noticed a sign over here on Peace Street right when you come down the hill on the left that said they restore crystal chandeliers and things.

Liisa: Do you all have any questions that you would like to ask that we haven't? OK. Any stories that you know about that...?

Interviewer 1: Do you mind telling about New Years Eve every year when everyone would come?

Garland: Yeah, we used to have everybody, the whole family would come over for New Years Eve. All the ones from out of town would come back and we'd store them around the house somewhere. They all had a place to stay. But you know, I don't know what you got upstairs over the back porch there, we fixed that for a sleeping porch when I was a kid. It was nice in the summertime but I loved it so I slept out there in the Winter and I remember when we had that big snow, it was a blizzard really. It was on March the 3rd in 1928 I think, I would have been nine years old and I spent the night out there. Of course I slept through all of the snowing and the wind blowing and everything, but the wind is blowing so hard that it had beaten snow in and around the edges of the window and on the windowsill right beside my bed, right where I was sleeping there was snow that deep on the inside when I woke up that morning. I couldn't believe it. We had about 22 - I had noticed since then when we have a big snow day they listed the biggest ones on record and that was always one of them, March the 3rd. it was almost Spring when that one came but boy it was something. I remember I couldn't hardly step in it to step over it. I had to drag my leg through it, I couldn't step over it.

Interviewer 1: Could you say something about the elevator in the house?

Garland: We had that put in before dad died. Not long, he didn't get to use it very long and mother didn't need it. She walked up and down the steps for a long time, as long as she could. Does it work now?

Interviewer 1: It's been disconnected now but it did work until it had been disconnected.

Garland: I knew it worked when I gave the house to the city but we put that in for them. That used to be what we called a telephone room because right where the elevators sitting there's a little table and a little stool there and the telephone had the receiver. You used to talk in the end and you pick up the receiver and the operator would say, number please and you'd tell her the number. The house number was 1428 was the telephone number here. It's right interesting the number and our store number two. You would have thought that might have been one of the state offices or something in capitol city, but it wasn't. Number one was the capitol city drugstore. It was on the corner of Salisbury and Hillsborough Street. That was number one and it was right interesting, the operator would ring whatever you told them. That sure has changed a lot too when you look at these cell phones.

[Laughter]

Liisda: What do you miss the most from that time?

Garland: I don't now. I don't think I miss it as much as my wife does. It bothers her how fast everything is moving now. She says we're all going too fast. I don't think that - the good part about it is I look back then, the stuff we have now I didn't miss it because I didn't know anything different. I mean, you were happy with what you had and it seemed like to me that life just moved a little bit slowly. Seemed like I would get out of school Friday afternoon a long time 'til Monday. Now from Saturday to Saturday is so fast that you just can't hardly believe it. But I tell you, it was nice and living was great. I'm thoroughly thankful that I got to see some of it back when it was like it was then. Hard for young folks like you to visualize it because without thinking about how it is without televisions or how it is without automatic telephones or how it is without all these things that - I mean if you wanted chicken fried chicken for Sunday dinner we went to the city market, picked out hew chicken, brought him home and it was my job to wring his neck and had to clean him and you never saw a dressed chicken at a grocery store, you know, or anything like that. About the only cookies you'd see would be gingersnaps or they did have those little chocolate covered cookies, I thought they were awfully good. I forgot what - you still see them, kind of marshmallow filling or something. They didn't have much like that that you could buy at the grocery store then that was prepared.

Liisa: Did you go to the Krispy Kreme or Person Street Pharmacy?

Garland: Well that came along a little bit later but it was, you know, they had a glass window and the machine would put those out and they would float by, you could stand

outside the window and watch them coming by while they were cooking. And they were really good, I don't know if they're as good now as they were then but they were so good then. It was across the street from where it is now. There was Person Street Pharmacy, it was on the corner. We had a Piggly Wiggly store next to it and then Krispy Kreme doughnut place and then later on they built another building and another drugstore went in there, right funny too of them that close together. Then when person Street Pharmacy opened a store at Five-Points in Hayes Barton, Hayes Barton Pharmacy now. But that was Person's Street Pharmacy number two for years and years and years. Same fellow ran it. He owned the two stores. Not many folks left to remember it.

Liisa: Would you have anything else to add, or...?

Garland: I don't have another thing. You all drained my brains out today.

[Laughter]

Liisa: Well, thank you so very much.

Garland: It's been a real pleasure. This house has meant a lot to us and I'm just glad that it worked out so it didn't have to be torn down. It was a happy home for me growing up. Used to have a bible class in the --- I reckon 40 years in the front room every Tuesday afternoon. Mother taught it sometimes but there was a miss chapel that went to another church out here on Peace Street. It wasn't the North Raleigh Chapel, I forget what they called it, but anyways, she would remember. You know, what's real funny. I've had two, three women, tell me who said how much they enjoyed that bible class but says, you know, I have to confess I went the first time I wanted to see what it looked like inside the house. I believe you said you knew somebody who said that.

Liisa: That's right.

Garland: So that was why they happened to go to bible class, they wanted to see what the house looked like inside but then they got interested in the bible, it meant more to them.

Liisa: That's great. Well thank you so very much.